

## Remembering Flight 3407

**T**he recent tragedy of American Airlines Flight 5342 was devastating, and our hearts go out to the 67 people who lost their lives, and to their families. Unfortunately, this pain is all too familiar to Clarence residents. It was 16 years ago today that the Town of Clarence was reeling from the unthinkable tragedy of Flight 3407, which crashed in Clarence Center on the night of Feb. 12. Before the crash of Flight 5342, Flight 3407 was the last fatal commercial airliner crash in the United States. We can never forget Flight 3407, its causes, and the subsequent bipartisan responses taken to improve aviation safety.

Anyone who lived in Clarence in 2009 can tell you where they were when they heard the news. First responders from the nearby Clarence Center Fire Hall and from across the nearby area raced to battle the flames and heroically mitigate the disaster. What the rescue workers saw and felt during this tragedy still weighs heavily on my heart. I'm thankful for their strength and the level of support for their readiness by the Clarence community.

Fourteen days of on-the-ground investigation followed, which led to a year-long analysis by oversight agencies to determine likely causes. As we examine the first crash since Flight 3407, it is important to learn from the past and follow the same comprehensive investigation. Speculative blame cannot right any of the wrongs that occurred. A robust investigation must assess the mechanical, human and environmental factors that led to the crash. I hope we can learn from Flight 5342 and create meaningful policy changes that will prevent future tragedies, but this will require good-faith analysis of the contributing factors instead of premature reactions to fit a narrative.

The Flight 3407 investigation concluded that fatigue, icing conditions and insufficient training contributed to the crash. This led to years of lobbying and advocating by the victims' families, resulting in bipartisan regulatory changes that increased

pilot training requirements and capped continuous flight hours. My son, who is a newly minted private pilot, is subject to these strict flight training regulations. He is required to complete 1,500 hours of flight hours to get his proper commercial certifications and is limited to 100 hours of flight time per month. His instructors specifically taught about Flight 3407 to train future pilots about the missteps and how to avoid them. It gives me peace of mind knowing that he and his copilots have the highest levels of training and can operate with clear minds. I am grateful to the families who, through their grief and hurt, found the strength to push for improved airline safety.

On this anniversary, please join me in praying for the victims, their families, the firefighters and all of our community members. May we always remember how we came together to help and to heal.



**Katie  
Webster**

**CLARENCE  
DEMOCRATIC  
COMMITTEE MEMBER**